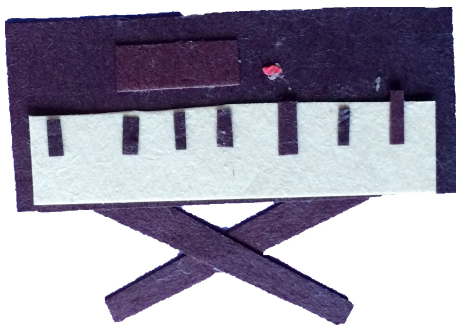


The Lakota Cultural Exchange Program



•Summer 2015•
Hosts



#friends #Lakota #doinggood #sharing #fun

#service #feels #communication #goodkarma

#kudos #thankyou #generous

#givingback #socialconscience #girlsrock

#exchange #7days #PineRidge #volunteer

#community #newperspectives #caring

#micasaessucasa #reservation

#makingarealdifference #purpose #sharingstories

#powerfulexperience #partnership

Reaching out to families with daughters doing Girls Rock! Chicago to find ones that would be enthused to share their time, home and experiences with a Lakota girl for whom enrichment opportunities like GR!C are lacking.

Why we're doing this:

The purpose of the Lakota Cultural Exchange Program (LCEP) is to connect girls from the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota with girls in Chicago in an informal exchange based on a shared love of music. The program is looking for camp families (with daughters participating as either campers or junior counselors) to host two girls, ages 16-17 (at the time of the 2015 summer camp), who will come to participate in Girls Rock! Chicago. While the exact camp dates won't be determined for some weeks, I'm forging ahead with early recruitment, so interested families can begin to plan for hosting one of the girls. (One girl will come for each session, with all flight and camp expenses covered by the LCEP through deeply appreciated donations from supporters of the exchange program.)

The program background that everyone needs (even those who've already seen it for the last year of my repeatedly sharing it with invested GR!C folks, as recent updates might interest):

You can find that on the exchange website at thelakotaculturalexchange.org. Information on niggling exchange specifics is spread between that page and some social media, including at [facebook.com/nikisnuts](https://www.facebook.com/nikisnuts) (named for the initial fundraising effort to cover flights last year).

Why you might want to participate:

I've worked and reworked the wording on this dozens of ways in the last year and a half in the tomes I emailed to generous staff at GR!C, in the online sources I've created and maintained, in the fundraising that attracted the attention of some incredibly benevolent donors, in presentations at my school, in articles I've written, and now in the brainstorming (see hashtags) I did in planning this handout. The message always boils down to something immediately obvious to anyone familiar with the history of the Lakota and the imposed economic and social problems that resulted from that history.

All of that is explained, as thoughtfully as I could manage from my vantage point, on the LCEP website where, if you check all of the tabs, you can find links to more appropriate (that is, Lakota, as it's their story to tell) sources including the Pine Ridge Community Storytelling Project and even Shepard Fairey's *Rebel Music: Native America* short video. (As a teenager myself, I can see where the latter might particularly speak to teen girls considering reasons for sharing with a Lakota guest.)

I've additionally purchased single copies for camp circulation (and private copies for each of the 2015 host families) of *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee*, *Black Elk Speaks*, and *Views from the Reservation*, as well as the "In the Spirit of Crazy Horse" back issue of *National Geographic* with Aaron Huey's "In the Shadow of Wounded Knee" photo journal. (If you're getting, from that list alone, the potential education in all of this and think that's something that might be good for, and appealing to, your family, then you're in for a real treat if you host a girl. The sharing of stories and truths that can only come about organically in friendship were, at least for me in the two pilots of this exchange in which I was personally involved, the most meaningful and educational part of the experience.)

What's involved in hosting:

All of what you'd expect in hosting any guest, just with the additional care appropriate for a teenager away from their family: welcoming them with airport pick-up, providing them a safe and loving environment and general hospitality across their stay, then sending them off with drop-off back at O'Hare. Naturally, the plan is to simply include your guest in all of what you'd normally do across the camp, taking them along with your daughter for the weekday activities, to the Saturday performance, and to the recording studio on Sunday. Flights will be arranged for the Sunday before camp starts (times will depend upon what is available nonstop) and for after the recording session on the final Sunday. Simply put, your guest will spend seven days with you, five with full-time camp hours and two with major camp obligations, then with the bit of downtime in what hours remain, spend time with you as might any guest visiting Chicago for the first time.

To prepare the Lakota girls for what to expect, in the handouts offered to them, it was put this way:

Host family plans are entirely between their guest and family members, so a lot of your early conversations are likely to focus on interests that might shape where to go: There is no end of option for every taste in Chicago, and no matter what your hosts plan, you'll be seeing and doing a lot that is very different from what you know at home. The lakefront is beautiful and just walking around, taking that in, seeing Buckingham Fountain, and getting the always-popular photos at the Bean will make for some serious touring. Some families like to picnic on that lakefront, others like museums and might offer to share those.

Chicago's world-famous architecture can be admired from endless vantage points, so one girl may go home with photos taken from street level, while another's pictures may all be from a boat tour. And just seeing how other families live is, in itself, fun: Maybe dinners on your hosts' deck, coffee at their favorite place, or going to the movies or out for breakfast with their friends will round out your days. Whatever plans they make for, or with, you are sure to create some lasting memories.



Windfall in a grant:

For the summer of 2015, I was able to secure transportation expenses to and from O'Hare and per diems, so that host families can count on \$200 to cover trips for guest pick-up and drop-off and \$30/day to cover, say, a meal out, or a museum trip here or there. (I'll be able to at least reapply for that grant for 2016, but for this coming summer, that money has already been allotted, so each host family can expect a total of \$410 to cover those incidentals across the week.)

Miscellaneous details really only relevant to those excited about the potential opportunity in hosting:

For security purposes, there will be a tiny bit of paperwork to protect all parties. Some of those specifics are still being determined by the attorney that the grant I got is letting me hire to help protect all of those parties.

What happens when:

Absolutely everything about this endeavor is donated: time, money, expertise, ... all in a spirit of goodwill that sustains me in my own efforts. But all of those good people giving of themselves have jobs, classes, families, and life obligations that contribute to a sort of fluid feel to what always seems to end up reliably organized: The biggest challenges in raising money to cover flights was completely removed from this go, when a tremendously generous philanthropist offered to pay for two girls to come this summer. He's even paying for the girls' camp tuition. Not decorating, filling, promoting and delivering jars of the seasonal Niki's Nuts that were central to my fundraising efforts all of last year freed me up to pursue the grant that I got to tweak some things to improve both the girls' and the host families' experience at least for this year, while I have the luxury of those very much appreciated funds.

I will love to talk with anyone interested in hosting (all of my contact information follows), but I'll apologize in advance for any short delays in my returning calls, texts, emails, or messages on Facebook (all of which I very much welcome):

I am newly double-majoring in Music Industry and Astronomy at the University of Southern California, and I'm in both the Trojan Marching Band (with to-be-determined-or-at-least-understood spring obligations, as well) and am going to try my hand at being a coxswain for Men's Crew (which means several hours of practice six days a week). The two-hour time difference does work in my favor, though, so I'll try to respond same or next day on all communication.

I have warned the girls who might apply that on the off chance that I don't find families that can commit to hosting for camp week, they may have to wait participation to summer 2016. The sooner I know if there is adequate interest and availability, the sooner I can move ahead preparing girls to wait that additional year, or if we have hosts for this summer, with purchasing tickets so that I can be sure that our guests have seats on the few nonstop flights between Rapid City and Chicago. Another prompt for action as early as camp families feel comfortable is the understandable anxiety the girls' parents feel about where their daughters will stay, what the host families are like, ... all things that can be addressed in communication with parents on Pine Ridge as soon as hosts are committed. Please feel free to contact me with any questions or ideas that come to mind.

Whether you can give a Lakota girl a home away for a week or not, I really appreciate your taking the time to read to this point and giving it any consideration.

With thanks for that (and for passing this along to someone else you think might be interested, if you're so inclined) -
Ava Polzin

Personal contact information:

Again, please feel free to message me on Facebook.

My phone: 224-475-7489 (Call or text.)

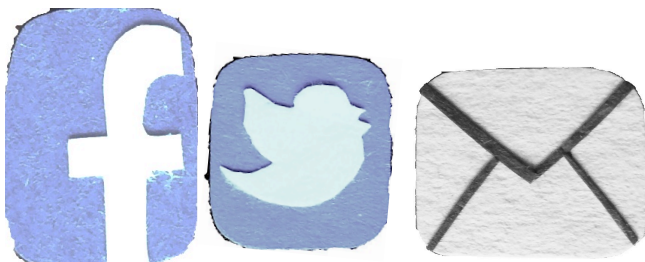
Email: rainforest412@sbcglobal.net

You can also contact me through the program website or Facebook page, but those are harder for me to access, so my preference would be to communicate on my personal accounts. For background and a general sense of the LCEP, though, please do visit:

thelakotaculturalexchangeprogram.org

[facebook.com/nikisnuts](https://www.facebook.com/nikisnuts)

@LakotaCExchange



#openheartmindandhome

#culturalawareness

#mutualinterest

#altruism

#usingsummerbreaktogrow

#investinginfuture

#gooddeeds

#winwin

#browniepoints

#education

#helpingothers

#empoweringteens

#nurturingcreativity

#uniqueopportunity

#kindness

#heartwarming

#fosteringunderstanding

#midwesternhospitality

